ETIE - I asked my friend Lonn Taylor of Fort Davis whether the Trans-Pecos or the Texas Panhandle could lay claim to being the state's last frontier. True historian that he is, he shies away from comparative words like first, best, last and biggest, but he agreed that it took awhile for settlers to venture into the vast plains claimed for centuries by Cheyennes, Kiowas and Comanches. The first settlement was a buffalo hunters' camp that grew up around Fort Elliott in what's now Wheeler County. It was called Hide-town, for the hunters who moved down from Kansas in the spring of 1874.

A few years later, the community's permanent residents decided they needed a more pleasing name. Since Sweetwater Creek ran nearby, Sweetwater sounded just right, but the U.S. Postal Service informed them a town in West Texas already claimed the name. The locals still liked the creek connection, so, as George Montgomery, the town's first postmaster, told the story years later, they got one of the Indian scouts at the fort "to come down to the town and give us an Indian name. So two Indians came with Billy Dixon as interpreter. They said 'Mobeetie' was sweet water in Indian. So that is how the town was named."